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ORAL ARGUMENT NOT YET SCHEDULED

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No. 11-1355  
(and consolidated cases)

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**In the United States Court of Appeals  
for the District of Columbia Circuit**

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**VERIZON,**

v.

Appellant,

**FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION,**  
Appellee.

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**On Petitions for Review  
from the Federal Communications Commission**

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**BRIEF OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA AND THE  
STATES OF GEORGIA, MICHIGAN, OKLAHOMA, SOUTH  
CAROLINA, AND WEST VIRGINIA AS AMICUS CURIAE  
IN SUPPORT OF REVERSAL**

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**CERTIFICATE OF PARTIES,  
RULINGS UNDER REVIEW, AND RELATED CASES**

**A. Parties and Amici**

The States of Georgia, Michigan, Oklahoma, South Carolina, West Virginia, and the Commonwealth of Virginia appear as amicus curiae in support of Appellants-Petitioners.

The principal parties in these consolidated cases are Appellant-Petitioner Verizon, Appellants-Petitioners MetroPCS Communications, Inc. and its FCC-licensed affiliates (MetroPCS 700 MHz, LLC; MetroPCS AWS, LLC; MetroPCS California, LLC; MetroPCS Florida, LLC; MetroPCS Georgia, LLC; MetroPCS Massachusetts, LLC; MetroPCS Michigan, Inc.; MetroPCS Networks California, LLC; MetroPCS Networks Florida LLC; MetroPCS Texas, LLC; and MetroPCS Wireless, Inc.) (collectively “MetroPCS”), Petitioner Free Press, Appellee-Respondent Federal Communications Commission, and Respondent United States of America.

ITTA – The Independent Telephone and Telecommunications Alliance has appeared as intervenor in support of Appellants-Petitioners. National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners,

National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates, Public Knowledge, Vonage Holdings Corporation, the Open Internet Coalition, and CTIA – The Wireless Association® have appeared as intervenors in support of Appellee-Respondents.

As set forth in the appendix to the ruling on review, the persons who appeared before the agency in the proceedings below are:

100 Black Men of America *et al.*  
2Wire, Inc.  
4G Americas, LLC  
4Info, Inc.  
ACT 1 Group *et al.*  
Adam Candeub and Daniel John McCartney  
ADTRAN, Inc.  
Adventia Innovative Systems  
African American Chamber of Commerce - Milwaukee  
African Methodist Episcopal Church  
Aircell LLC  
Akamai Technologies, Inc.  
Alabama State Conference of the NAACP Alarm Industry Communications Committee  
Alcatel-Lucent  
Allbritton Communications Company  
Alliance for Digital Equality  
Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions  
Amazon.com  
American Arab Chamber of Commerce  
American Association of Independent Music American Association of People with Disabilities American Business Media  
American Cable Association American Center for Law and Justice  
American Civil Rights Union  
American Consumer Institute CCR American Council of the Blind

American Federation of Television & Radio Artists, Directors Guild of America, International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Screen Actors Guild  
American Homeowners Grassroots Alliance  
American Indian Chamber of Commerce of Wisconsin  
American Legislative Exchange Council  
American Library Association, Association of Research Libraries, EDUCAUSE  
Americans for Prosperity  
Americans for Tax Reform and Media Freedom Project Americans for Tax Reform Digital Liberty Project Americans for Technology Leadership  
Annie McGrady  
Anti-Defamation League  
AOL Inc. Arts+Labs  
Asian American Justice Center Assemblywoman Debbie Smith  
Association for Competitive Technology  
Association of Research Libraries  
Association of Research Libraries, EDUCAUSE, Internet2, NYSERNet, and ACUTA AT&T Inc.  
Automation Alley  
Ball State University Center for Information and Communications Science  
Barbara A. Cherry  
Barbara S. Esbin  
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Will and Grundy Counties  
Black Leadership Forum, Inc.  
Bret Swanson, President, Entropy Economics LLC Bright House Networks, LLC  
Broadband Institute of California and Broadband Regulatory Clinic  
Broadcast Music, Inc. BT Americas Inc.  
Cablevision Systems Corporation  
California Consumers for Net Neutrality California Public Utilities Commission Camiant, Inc.  
Carbon Disclosure Project  
Career Link Inc.  
Catherine Sandoval and Broadband Institute of California

CDMA Development Group, Inc. Center for Democracy & Technology  
Center for Individual Freedom  
Center for Media Justice, Consumers Union, Media Access Project, and  
New America  
Center for Rural Strategies  
Center for Social Media  
Central Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce  
CenturyLink  
Chairman Kenneth D. Koehler, McHenry County Board  
Chamber of Commerce of St. Joseph County  
Charter Communications  
Christopher S. Yoo  
Christopher Sacca  
Cincinnati Bell Wireless LLC Cisco Systems, Inc.  
City of Philadelphia  
Clearwire Corporation  
Coalition of Minority Chambers  
ColorOfChange.org  
Comcast Corporation  
Communications Workers of America  
Communications Workers of America—District 2 in West Virginia  
Communications Workers of America—Local 3806  
Communications Workers of America—Local 4900  
Competitive Enterprise Institute  
COMPTEL CompTIA  
Computer & Communications Industry Association  
Computer Communications Industry Association, Consumer Electronics  
Association  
Computing Technology Industry Association  
CONNECT  
Connecticut Association for United Spanish Action, Inc. Connecticut  
Technology Council  
Consumer Policy Solutions  
Corning Incorporated  
Corporation for National Research Initiatives  
Council of Baptist Pastors of Detroit & Vicinity, Inc. Covad  
Communications Company

Cox Communications, Inc.  
Craig Settles (Successful.com) CREDO Action  
Cricket Communications, Inc. CTIA - The Wireless Association CWA  
Indiana State Council  
CWA Local 4900  
Damian Kulash  
Daniel Lyons  
Data Foundry, Inc.  
David Clark, William Lehr, and Steve Bauer  
David D.F. Uran, Mayor, City of Crown Point, Indiana  
Deborah Turner Debra Brown Derek Leebaert  
Dickinson Area Partnership Digital Education Coalition Digital  
Entrepreneurs  
Digital Society  
DISH Network L.L.C.  
Distributed Computing Industry Association  
Downtown Springfield, Inc. EarthLink, Inc.  
Eastern Kentucky's Youth Association for the Arts, Inc.  
Economic Development Council of Livingston County  
Eight Mile Boulevard Association  
El Centro  
Electronic Frontier Foundation  
Elgin Area Chamber Elizabeth A. Dooley, Ed. D. Entertainment  
Software Association Ericsson Inc.  
Erie Neighborhood House  
Fiber-to-the-Home Council  
Free Press  
Frontier Communications  
Future of Music Coalition  
Future of Privacy Forum  
G. Baeslack  
General Communication, Inc.  
Genesee Regional Chamber of Commerce  
George Ou  
Georgetown/Scott County Kentucky Chamber of Commerce  
Georgia Minority Supplier Development Council

Global Crossing North America, Inc. Global Intellectual Property Center  
Google Inc.  
Great River Economic Development Foundation  
Greater Kokomo Economic Development Alliance  
GSM Association GVNW Consulting, Inc. Hamilton County Alliance  
Hance Haney Hannah Miller Harris Corporation  
HB Clark  
Hispanic Leadership Fund  
Hispanic Technology and Telecommunications Partnership  
Hmong/American Friendship Association, Inc. Hughes Network Systems, LLC  
Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce  
Independent Creator Organizations  
Independent Film & Television Alliance  
Independent Telephone & Telecommunications Alliance  
Indiana Secretary of State  
Indianapolis Urban League  
Information and Communications Manufacturers and Service Providers  
Information Technology and Innovation Foundation  
Information Technology Industry Council Institute for Emerging Leaders, Inc. Institute for Liberty  
Institute for Policy Innovation  
Institute for Policy Integrity  
Intellectual Property and Communications Law Program at Michigan State  
University College of Law  
International Documentary Association, Film Independent, and others  
Internet Freedom Coalition  
Internet Innovation Alliance  
Internet Society  
Intrado Inc. and Intrado Communications Inc. Ionary Consulting  
Jared Morris  
Jeanne K. Magill, Pabst Farms Development Inc.  
Joe Armstrong, Tennessee State Representative  
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Johnson County Board of Commissioners  
Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Joliet Region Chamber  
of Commerce & Industry Kankakee County Farm Bureau  
Karen Kerrigan, President & CEO, Small Business & Entrepreneurship  
Council  
Karen Maples  
Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement  
Lake Superior Community Partnership  
Lakewood Chamber of Commerce  
Latin American Chamber of Commerce of Charlotte  
Latin Chamber of Commerce of Nevada  
Latinos for Internet Freedom and Media Action Grassroots Network  
Latinos in Information Sciences & Technology Association  
Laurence Brett Glass, d/b/a LARIAT  
Lawerence E. Denney, Speaker of the House, State of Idaho  
Lawrence County Economic Growth Council  
Lawrence Morrow  
Leadership East Kentucky  
League of United Latin American Citizens  
Leap Wireless International, Inc. and Cricket Communications, Inc.  
Level 3 Communications LLC  
Links Technology Solutions, Inc.  
Lisa Marie Hanlon, TelTech Communications LLC M3X Media, Inc.  
Mabuhay Alliance  
Maneesh Pangasa Mary-Anne Wolf Matthew J. Cybulski Mayor Brad  
Stephens  
Mayor George Pabey, City of East Chicago, Indiana  
Mayor Leon Rockingham, Jr.  
Mayor Rudolph Clay, Gary, Indiana  
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Media Action Grassroots Network, ColorOfChange.org, Presente.org,  
Applied Research Center, Afro-Netizen, National Association of  
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Midwest Free Community Papers, Community Papers of Ohio and West  
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Mississippi Center for Education Innovation

Mississippi Center for Justice MLB Advanced Media, L.P. Mobile  
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Mobile Internet Content Coalition

Motion Picture Association of America, Inc. Motorola, Inc.

Nacional Records

Nate Zolman

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

National Association of Manufacturers

National Association of Realtors

National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates

National Association of Telecommunications Office & Advisors

National Black Chamber of Commerce

National Cable & Telecommunications Association

National Coalition on Black Civic Participation

National Council of La Raza

National Emergency Number Association

National Exchange Carrier Association, Inc.

National Exchange Carrier Association, Inc., National  
Telecommunications

Cooperative Association, Organization for the Promotion &  
Advancement of Small Telecommunication Companies, Eastern Rural  
Telecom Association, Western Telecommunications Alliance

National Farmers Union

National Foundation for Women Legislators High Speed Internet  
Caucus

National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators

National Hispanic Media Coalition  
National Medical Association  
National Organization of Black Elected Legislative Women *et al.*  
National Organizations  
National Rural Health Association National Spinal Cord Injury  
Association National Taxpayers Union  
National Telecommunications Cooperative Association  
National Urban League  
Netflix, Inc. Network 2010  
New America Foundation  
New Jersey Rate Counsel  
New York State Office of Chief Information Officer/Office for  
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Nokia Siemens Networks US LLC  
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Office of the Mayor, City of Peru  
Older Adults Technology Services, Inc. Open Internet Coalition  
Open Media and Information Companies Initiative  
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Phil Kerpen, Vice President, Americans for Prosperity  
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Public Interest Advocates  
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QUALCOMM Incorporated  
Qwest Communications International Inc. R. L. Barnes  
Rainbow PUSH Coalition  
Recording Industry Association of America  
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Rev. W.L.T. Littleton  
Richmond Chamber of Commerce  
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Robert Steele, Cook County Commissioner  
Rural Cellular Association  
Safe Internet Alliance  
Saint Xavier University  
Sandvine Inc.  
Satellite Broadband Commenters  
SavetheInternet.com  
Scott Cleland Scott Jordan Sean Kraft Sean Sowell Seth Johnson  
Shelby County Development Corporation  
Skype Communications S.A.R.L. Sling Media, Inc.  
Smartcomm, LLC  
Smithville Telephone Company  
Software & Information Industry Association  
Songwriters Guild of America  
Sony Electronics Inc.  
Southern Company Services, Inc.  
Southern Wayne County Regional Chamber of Commerce  
Sprint Nextel Corp.  
St. Louis Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
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SureWest Communications  
Susan Jacobi  
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Telecom Italia, S.P.A.  
Telecom Manufacturer Coalition  
Telecommunications Industry Association  
TeleDimensions, Inc. Telefonica S.A.  
Telephone Association of Maine  
Texas Office of Public Utility Counsel  
Texas Public Policy Foundation  
Texas Statewide Telephone Cooperative, Inc.  
The Ad Hoc Telecommunications Users Committee

The Berroteran Group  
The Disability Network  
The Free State Foundation  
The Greater Centralia Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Office  
The Greenlining Institute  
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United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce  
United States Telecom Association  
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Upper Peninsula Economic Development Alliance  
Upper Peninsula Health Plan  
Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle  
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Washington State Grange  
Wayne Brough, James Gattuso, Hance Haney, Ryan Radia, and James  
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Wireless Communications Association International, Inc. Wireless Internet Service Providers Association  
World Institute on Disability *et al.*  
Writers Guild of America, East AFL-CIO Writers Guild of America, West, Inc.  
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**B. Ruling Under Review**

Appellants-Petitioners appealed the final order of the Federal Communications Commission captioned *In re Preserving the Open Internet; Broadband Industry Practices*, Report and Order, Docket Nos. 09-191, 07-52, 25 F.C.C.R. 17905 (rel. Dec. 23, 2010), 76 Fed. Reg. 59192 (Sept. 23, 2011) (JA\_\_).

**C. Related Cases**

This case has been consolidated with Case Nos. 11-1356, 11-1403, 11-1404, and 11-1411.

This case is related to *Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless v. FCC*, Nos. 11-1135 & 11-1136 (D.C. Cir.), in that both cases involve substantially the same parties and the similar legal issue of the Commission's statutory authority under Section 706 and Title III of the Communications Act to regulate broadband Internet services and the

extent to which such regulation constitutes prohibited common-carrier regulation under *FCC v. Midwest Video Corp.*, 440 U.S. 689 (1979).

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**STATEMENT OF IDENTITY,  
INTERESTS, AND AUTHORITY TO FILE AS AMICI**

The Commonwealth of Virginia, pursuant to Fed. R. App. P. 29(a), files this Amicus Brief in support of the argument made by the Joint Brief for Verizon and MetroPCS (Doc. 1381604) that the FCC's assertion of regulatory authority is without legal basis. Virginia and the other Amici States have an interest in preserving the actual statutory scheme established by Congress because of their policy in favor of property rights and free markets and of preserving the residual regulatory power retained by the States. The Congressional scheme, properly construed, leaves room for those closest and most accountable to regulate in the interests of their constituencies and reserves open space for individual innovation and free exchange unchecked by the heavy hand of distant, unaccountable bureaucracies. Because the FCC's interpretation of Congress' delegation, where it does not actually violate its express terms, is untethered to the statutory text and knows no logical limit, it should be rejected.

**SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT**

Congress has delegated to the FCC certain, defined regulatory authority. Specifically, Congress elected to afford the FCC the power to

regulate, as common carriers, certain telecommunications providers, and to withhold from the FCC regulatory authority over information service providers and private mobile service providers ("broadband Internet providers"), such as appellants. Because the challenged order, *Preserving the Open Internet*, 25 F.C.C.R. 17905 (rel. Dec. 23, 2010), 76 Fed. Reg. 59192 (Sept. 23, 2011) ("Order"), subjects broadband Internet providers to common-carrier-type regulation, in violation of Congress' express limitation, the Order is beyond the FCC's authority.

Not only is the FCC regulating contrary to expressed intent, it has not identified any plausible, affirmative statutory authority for the FCC to regulate as the Order does. Instead, the FCC in the Order cites a number of disparate provisions, sharing only one commonality: no one provision standing alone, nor all of them standing together, confers the claimed authority. The FCC's attempt to override the settled judgment of Congress not to regulate in this way should be rejected.

## ARGUMENT

### **I. The Order Subjects Broadband Internet Providers to Common-Carrier Regulation, in Contravention of Statute.**

Although it "is enough here for [the Court] to find that the Communications Act of 1934 does not indicate a legislative intent to

delegate authority to the Commission to regulate" as they desire to, *American Library Association v. FCC*, 406 F.3d 689, 706 (D.C. Cir. 2005), the services regulated by the Order are expressly defined to lie outside the purview of the FCC.

**A. Telecommunication Laws Prohibit Common-Carrier Regulation of Broadband Internet Providers.**

The Communications Act of 1934 ("Act"), 47 U.S.C. §§ 151 through 621, as amended, authorizes the broad regulation of "telecommunication carriers," which includes "any provider of telecommunication services" who offer "directly to the public, or to such classes of users as to be effectively available directly to the public, regardless of the facilities used," to transmit information, "for a fee," "between or among points specified by the user, of information of the user's choosing, without change in the form or content of the information as sent and received." Section 3(50), (51), and (53); 47 U.S.C. § 153(50), (51), and (53). The Act provides that "telecommunication carriers" are to "be treated as a common carrier" subject to broad FCC regulation under Title II, Sections 201 through 231; 47 U.S.C. §§ 201 through 231, but "only to the extent that it is engaged in providing telecommunication services." Section 3(53); 47 U.S.C. § 153(53).

The Act also provides for common-carrier regulation of "commercial mobile service." That is, all mobile services "provided for profit [that] make[] interconnected service available (A) to the public or (B) to such classes of eligible users as to be effectively available to a substantial portion of the public." Crucially, the Act expressly exempts "private mobile service" from common-carrier regulation "for any purpose." See Section 332(c)(1)(A) and (2), (d)(1) and (3); 47 U.S.C. § 332(c)(1)(A) and (2), (d)(1) and (3).

In providing broadband Internet service, telecommunication carriers are not providing "telecommunication services" that are subject to "mandatory common-carrier regulation."<sup>1</sup> *Nat'l Cable & Telecomms. Ass'n v. Brand X Internet Servs.*, 545 U.S. 967, 974 (2005). Rather, in providing that service, the carriers fall within the regulatory classification of "information service" providers. Section 3(24); 47

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<sup>1</sup> The various types of broadband Internet service, whether wireline, *Appropriate Framework for Broadband Access to the Internet Over Wireline Facilities*, 20 F.C.C.R. 14853, 14862-65 (2005) ("Wireline Order"), wireless, or mobile wireless, *Appropriate Regulatory Treatment for Broadband Access to the Internet Over Wireless Networks*, 22 F.C.C.R. 5901, 5909-12, 5915-21 (2007) ("Wireless Order"), have been defined, like the cable broadband Internet service in *Brand X*, as an "information service" that is "not subject to Title II regulation as common carriers." *Wireless Broadband Order*, 22 F.C.C.R. at 5916.

U.S.C. § 153(24). Such providers "are not subject to mandatory common-carrier regulation" by the FCC, but only to the FCC's "Title I ancillary jurisdiction," contained in Section 4(i), 47 U.S.C. § 154(i). *See Brand X*, 545 U.S. at 975-76 ("The Act regulates telecommunications carriers, but not information-service providers, as common carriers."); *see also*, Act § 332(c)(2); 47 U.S.C. § 332(c)(2) (prohibiting regulation of private mobile service providers as common carriers). Thus, the FCC is duty bound to refrain from common-carrier regulation of broadband Internet providers, a point the FCC conceded in *FCC v. Comcast*, 600 F.3d 642, 645 (D.C. Cir. 2010), and did not dispute in the Order. Yet the "fixed and mobile broadband providers" who are regulated by the Order are unquestionably being regulated as common carriers despite being only providers of information services and private mobile services. *See Order*, 76 Fed. Reg. at 59192.

**B. The Order Imposes Common-Carrier Obligations on Broadband Internet Providers by Fixing Prices, Prohibiting Discrimination between Users and Uses, and Requiring Public Disclosure of Practices.**

Despite the FCC's conclusory claim to the contrary, the agency is imposing many common-carrier obligations on all broadband Internet providers. Hence, the Order's requirements violate the limitation in

Section 332(c)(2), as well as the limitation in Section 3(24). *See Order*, 76 Fed. Reg. at 59208 n.92. It is the "character of [the] regulatory obligations" imposed on the carrier, not whether "the rules promote statutory objectives," that controls whether the FCC's regulation of entities not subject to common-carrier regulation exceed its authority. *See FCC v. Midwest Video Corp. (Midwest Video II)*, 440 U.S. 689, 702 (1979). At bottom, a provider is made a "common carrier" whenever the law prohibits the provider from "'mak[ing] individualized decisions, in particular cases, whether and on what terms to deal.'" *Id.* at 701 (quoting *Nat'l Ass'n of Regulatory Util. Comm'rs v. FCC (NARUC I)*, 525 F.2d 630, 641 (D.C. Cir. 1976)).

Significantly, for purposes of this appeal, the Order promulgates four rules, three of which are placed in Sections: the "Transparency," "No Blocking," and "No Unreasonable Discrimination" provisions, 8.3, 8.5, and 8.7, respectively. The fourth requirement, the Order's ban on "charging . . . a fee" "for delivering traffic to or carrying traffic from the broadband provider's end-user customers" to "edge providers," those who provide "content, application[s], service[s], [or] device[s]" to end users, constitutes the "No Fee" rule. *Order*, 76 Fed. Reg. at 59192 n.1,

59205, 59232. These four rules constitute "a series of interrelated obligations ensuring public access to [broadband Internet service] and regulat[ing] the manner in which access is to be afforded and the charges that may be levied for providing it." *Midwest Video II*, 440 U.S. at 692. Therefore, "[e]ffectively, the Commission has relegated [broadband Internet service providers], *pro tanto*, to common-carrier status." *Id.* at 700-01.

First, the "No Blocking" rule prohibits "fixed broadband Internet access service" providers from blocking "lawful content, applications, services, or non-harmful devices" and "mobile broadband Internet access service" providers from blocking "consumers from accessing lawful Web sites" or blocking "applications that compete with the provider's voice or video telephony services." *Order*, 76 Fed. Reg. at 59232. The rule also "bars broadband providers from impairing or degrading particular content, applications, services, or non-harmful devices so as to render them effectively unusable." *Id.* at 59205. Thus, the rule imposes on all broadband Internet providers a duty to accept (and thus provide the infrastructure to facilitate) all edge provider

traffic, from whatever source and of whatever type, a key attribute of common-carrier status.

The "No Unreasonable Discrimination" rule prohibits "unreasonably discriminat[ing] in transmitting lawful network traffic over a consumer's broadband Internet access service." *Order*, 76 Fed. Reg. at 59232. Broadband Internet providers are prohibited from entering into "a commercial arrangement [with] a third party to directly or indirectly favor some traffic over other traffic," and from "prioritizing its own content, applications, or services, or those of its affiliates." *Id.* at 59206, 59207. Forbidding a private company from tying price to service or preferring certain classes of customers gives rise to common-carrier status.<sup>2</sup>

These restrictions, coupled with the "No Fee" rule, which serves to fix the price to be charged the public for service, completely prevent

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<sup>2</sup> That the "No Blocking" and "No Unreasonable Discrimination" rules allow for "reasonable network management" have no effect upon whether common-carrier obligations are imposed, just as allowing a bus company to require would-be riders to enter the bus one at a time, and sit two to a seat, does not change the nature of the obligation to transport all persons at the same rate. *See NARUC I*, 525 F.2d at 641 (reciting that common carriers retain the right to "turn away" business "because it is not of the type normally accepted or because the carrier's capacity has been exhausted.").

broadband providers from "'mak[ing] individualized decisions, in particular cases, whether and on what terms to deal.'" *Midwest Video II*, 440 U.S. at 701 (quoting *NARUC I*, 525 F.2d at 641). And the "Transparency" rule imposes a modernized tariffing obligation on broadband Internet providers akin to that imposed on common carriers. See Section 203(a); 47 U.S.C. § 203(a) (requiring common carriers to file and publicly display schedules of charges for transmission).

According to *Midwest Video II*, courts should determine whether any portion of the service provided is made subject to common-carriage obligations, not whether the regulated entity remains free to control other portions of its enterprise. See 440 U.S. at 700-01 n.9 (noting that "[a] cable system may operate as a common carrier with respect to a portion of its service only" in holding that access rules that required "cable operators to [allow all] members of the public who wish to communicate by the cable medium" to viewers to do so on their cable systems "relegated cable systems . . . to common-carrier status"); see also *NARUC I*, 525 F.2d at 641 (To be a common carrier, "a given carrier's services [need not] practically be available to the entire public. One may be a common carrier though the nature of the service rendered

is sufficiently specialized as to be of possible use to only a fraction of the total population.").

The fact that these rules would constitute valid exercises of the FCC's authority to regulate common carriers confirms the Order's character as one imposing common-carrier obligations for broadband Internet providers, in excess of the FCC's authority. *See* Section 201(a); 47 U.S.C. § 201(a) (requiring "every common carrier engaged in . . . communication by wire or radio to furnish such communication service upon reasonable request"); Section 201(b); 47 U.S.C. § 201(b) (requiring that "[a]ll charges . . . be just and reasonable"); Section 202; 47 U.S.C. § 202(a) (prohibiting "any common carrier [from] mak[ing] any unjust or unreasonable discrimination in charges, practices, classifications, regulations, facilities, or services"); Section 218; 47 U.S.C. § 218 (requiring common carriers to provide certain information to the FCC).

**II. The Order's Assertion of Authority is Untethered to and Unbounded by the FCC's Statutory Delegations of Authority.**

No provision of the Act may be fairly read to foreshadow, much less intend, FCC regulation of broadband Internet access as undertaken in the Order. "It is axiomatic that administrative agencies may issue

regulations only pursuant to authority delegated to them by Congress," and it is similarly axiomatic that "[t]he FCC may act either pursuant to express statutory authority to promulgate regulations addressing a variety of designated issues involving communications, . . . or pursuant to ancillary jurisdiction," but may not act simply on its own sense of good policy on all matters within its general sphere of interest. *Am. Library Ass'n*, 406 F.3d at 691, 692, 698 ("[T]he FCC's power to promulgate legislative regulations is limited to the scope of the authority Congress has delegated to it."). And the FCC's ancillary authority may be exercised only over those "regulated subject[s]" within the FCC's Title I jurisdictional grant and then only by regulations "reasonably ancillary to the Commission's effective performance of its statutorily mandated responsibilities." *Comcast*, 600 F.3d at 646 (quoting *Am. Library Ass'n*, 406 F.3d at 692). Because the Order is not within the FCC's expressly delegated regulatory authority over broadband Internet service, or any authority ancillary to its express authority, the Order exceeds the outer limits of the FCC's power.

**A. There is No Express Statutory Authority for the FCC to Regulate Broadband Internet Providers as Such.**

In the present case, as in the past, the FCC founds its regulations not on "delegations of regulatory authority" by Congress, but on mere generalized statements of Congressional purpose, policy, or objectives. *See Comcast*, 600 F.3d at 654. But "statements of policy, by themselves, do not create 'statutorily mandated responsibilities.'" *Comcast*, 600 F.3d at 644 (holding that "[t]he teaching" of the case law on the FCC's ancillary authority is "that policy statements alone cannot provide the basis for the Commission's exercise of ancillary authority"). And the requisite "close and searching analysis of congressional intent," *ACLU v. FCC*, 823 F.2d 1554, 1557 (D.C. Cir. 1987), turns up no evidence that the "broad authority" to regulate the Internet claimed by the FCC was delegated to it by Congress. *See Order*, 76 Fed. Reg. at 59214.

As recently as 2010, the FCC conceded the lack of any express authority to regulate broadband Internet services. *Comcast*, 600 F.3d at 645. To defend this Order, however, the FCC cobbles together an array of statutory policy statements in lieu of statutory delegations of authority. The only serious candidate of a source of express authority claimed by the Order is Section 706 of the 1996 Telecommunications

Act ("1996 Act"), 47 U.S.C. § 1302, entitled "Advanced telecommunications incentives." That section provides:

The Commission and each State commission with regulatory jurisdiction over telecommunications services shall encourage the deployment on a reasonable and timely basis of advanced telecommunications capability to all Americans (including, in particular, elementary and secondary schools and classrooms) by utilizing, in a manner consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity, price cap regulation, regulatory forbearance, measures that promote competition in the local telecommunications market, or other regulating methods that remove barriers to infrastructure investment.

1996 Act § 706(a); 47 U.S.C. § 1302(a). The next subpart directs the Commission, upon finding that "advanced telecommunications capability is [not] being deployed to all Americans in a reasonable and timely fashion," to "take immediate action to accelerate deployment of such capability by removing barriers to infrastructure investment and by promoting competition in the telecommunications market," specifically targeting "unserved" "geographical areas." 1996 Act § 706(b); 47 U.S.C. § 1302(b) and (c).

After this Court concluded that the FCC was bound by an earlier interpretation of that provision as not providing "'an independent grant

of authority'" to which any regulation could be ancillary, *Comcast*, 600 F.3d at 658-59 (quoting *In re Deployment of Wireline Servs. Offering Advanced Telecomms. Capability*, 13 F.C.C.R. 24,012, 24,047, ¶ 77 (1998) (*Advanced Series Order*)), the FCC, in the Order under review, refused to honor that earlier Order's plain meaning, as construed by this Court, and instead cited Section 706 as a font of "substantive authority." *Order*, 76 Fed. Reg. at 59215 n.126, n.128. In view of this Court's decision, the FCC is not free to simply ignore its earlier interpretation of Section 706. Nor does the text of that statute permit the construction the FCC has placed upon it.

First, it would be odd indeed to read a statute directing both "[t]he Commission *and each State commission with regulatory jurisdiction* over telecommunication services" to "encourage the deployment on a reasonable and timely basis of advanced telecommunications capability to all Americans" as one delegating *federal* authority to regulate information services and private mobile services. Furthermore, both subparts of Section 706 of the 1996 Act speak only to the rate and extent of geographic deployment and distribution of telecommunications infrastructure, e.g., the laying of fiber optic lines and so forth, not to the

network management practices of broadband Internet providers nationally, putting the latter outside the scope of any supposed delegation. The fact that the aim of this section is ensuring the provision of necessary infrastructure to various parts of the country is confirmed by the repeated references to providing access to the Nation's "elementary and secondary schools and classrooms." 1996 Act § 706(a) and (b); 47 U.S.C. § 1302(a), (b), and (c); *cf.* 20 U.S.C. § 7801(18) and (38). Finally, by directing the use of specific regulatory powers already granted to the FCC, *see* (Doc. 1381604 at 29-30), and not simply authorizing the FCC to utilize all methods that seem advisable to accomplish the statutory end, Section 706 confirms that it was not Congress' intent to delegate to the FCC general regulatory authority over broadband Internet providers, but only to direct the FCC to use its conferred powers "to encourage . . . deployment" of network infrastructure. 1996 Act § 706; 47 U.S.C. § 1302(a).

No other provision cited, or theory postulated, by the FCC fares any better for none speak to broadband. So the agency is reduced to postulating statements of Congressional policy or purpose as statutory delegations. *See Order*, 76 Fed. Reg. at 59214 (citing Section 230(b)(2);

47 U.S.C. § 230(b)(2)). But this argument was rejected by this Court expressly in *Comcast*. See 600 F.3d at 654 (rejecting Act § 230; 47 U.S.C. § 230 as a basis for FCC regulatory authority over the Internet, for "policy statements alone cannot provide the basis for the Commission's exercise of ancillary authority"). In sum, there is no authority for the "No Blocking," "No Unreasonable Discrimination," and "No Fee" rules.

Finally, the "Transparency" provision similarly suffers from want of express statutory authorization. Neither provision cited by the Order in support, see *Comcast*, 600 F.3d at 660 (holding that "the Commission must defend its action on the same grounds advanced in the *Order*"), confer upon the FCC a statutory duty to obtain information from broadband Internet providers. See Section 4(k)(1); 47 U.S.C. § 154(k)(1) (merely identifying the contents of reports to be submitted to Congress); Section 218; 47 U.S.C. § 218 (authorizing the FCC to seek "full and complete information necessary to enable the Commission to perform the duties and carry out the objects for which it was created," but only from "all carriers subject to this Act" (emphasis added)). Thus, the FCC

has again failed to "link[] the cited policies to express delegations of regulatory authority." *Comcast*, 600 F.3d at 654.

**B. The Order's Claim of Ancillary Authority Fails Because The Ancillary Authority Claimed is Unbounded.**

By offering a theory of ancillary authority that would create broad authority where none otherwise exists, the FCC has necessarily failed to show that the regulations are exercises of authority that "really [are] incidental to, and contingent upon, *specifically delegated powers under the Act.*" *Comcast*, 600 F.3d at 653 (quoting *National Ass'n of Regulatory Util. Comm'rs v. FCC (NARUC II)*, 533 F.2d 601, 612 (D.C. Cir. 1976)). For to treat as ancillary a claim of authority that would itself justify the plenary imposition of common-carrier-type access, public disclosure, non-discrimination, and price-fixing regulation upon a non-common carrier, "would [not] virtually[, but completely] free the Commission from its Congressional tether." *Id.* at 655.

Accepting the FCC's theory of its own ancillary authority under Section 706 of the 1996 Act, or any other provision, would affirm that the FCC possesses unbounded authority to regulate broadband Internet. This fact is demonstrated by the FCC's inability to identify in

the Order any substantive limits on its authority to regulate broadband Internet service under its theory. The most it could do was to try to "obviate the concern of some commenters" by suggesting that it still is limited to regulating "'interstate and foreign commerce in communication by wire and radio,'" *Order*, 76 Fed. Reg. at 59215, 59216 n.129 (quoting Act § 1; 47 U.S.C. § 151), and so presumably could not regulate the medical industry or the waters of the United States, for example. The FCC only confirms that it views itself as having plenary authority to regulate broadband Internet providers when it asserts that its "understanding of Section 706(a) is . . . harmonious with other statutory provisions that confer a broad mandate on the Commission," being "no broader than other provisions," such as various common-carrier regulations. *Order*, 76 Fed. Reg. at 59216.

In obedience to the axiom that "administrative agencies may [act] only pursuant to authority delegated to them by Congress,'" *Comcast*, 600 F.3d at 654 (quoting *American Library Association*, 406 F.3d at 691), courts have uniformly, repeatedly, and rightly rejected "unbounded" interpretations of agency ancillary authority. See *Midwest Video II*, 440 U.S. at 706; see, e.g., *Comcast*, 600 F.3d at 655; *Am.*

*Library Ass'n*, 406 F.3d at 694; *NARUC II*, 533 F.2d at 617 ("Commission power over the communications industries is not unlimited"). That should be the result here in deference both to the express Congressional command to leave the Internet "unfettered by Federal or State regulation," Section 230(b)(2); 47 U.S.C. § 230(b)(2), and Congress' implicit direction arising from its refusal to enact so-called net neutrality legislation.<sup>3</sup> In short, it is clear that the FCC presently lacks any broad authority over broadband Internet services. See *FDA v. Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp.*, 529 U.S. 120, 160 (2000) ("Given this history [of Congressional engagement] and the breadth of the authority that the FDA has asserted, we are obliged to defer not to the agency's expansive construction of the statute, but to Congress' consistent judgment to deny the FDA this power.").

## **CONCLUSION**

The Order should be vacated as beyond the FCC's authority.

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<sup>3</sup> Various unenacted bills regarding FCC regulation of the Internet include: Network Neutrality Act of 2006, H.R. 5273, 109th Cong. (2006); Internet Non-Discrimination Act of 2006, S. 2360, 109th Cong. (2006); Internet Freedom Preservation Act, S. 2917, 109th Cong. (2006); Internet Freedom, Broadband Promotion, and Consumer Protection Act of 2011, S. 74, 112th Cong. (2011); The Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act of 2011, H.R. 1, 112th Cong. (2011); H. Amdt. to H.R. 1, 112th Congress (2011).

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Pursuant to Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(7)(C) and Circuit Rule 32(a), I hereby certify that this brief complies with the type-volume limitation of Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(7)(B) because the brief contains 3,527 words, excluding the parts of the brief exempted by Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(7)(B)(iii) and Circuit Rule 32(a)(1). I further certify that this brief complies with the typeface requirements of Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(5) and the type style requirements of Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(6) because the brief has been prepared in a proportionally spaced typeface using Microsoft Word 2007 in Century Schoolbook 14-point font.

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I hereby certify that the foregoing BRIEF OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA AND THE STATES OF GEORGIA, MICHIGAN, OKLAHOMA, SOUTH CAROLINA, AND WEST VIRGINIA AS AMICUS CURIAE IN SUPPORT OF REVERSAL has been filed with the Clerk of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit this July 23, 2012, by using the appellate CM/ECF system, which will send notification of said filing to the attorneys of record, who have registered with the Court's CM/ECF system. Nine copies of the foregoing will be filed with the Clerk of the Court for the United States of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit within two business days.

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